

Welcome to the Division of Disease Prevention's HAV and HBV Vaccine Fact Sheet



A vaccine is substance used to stimulate a person's immunity (protection against) a certain disease. Some vaccines stimulate immunity by encouraging the body to make antibodies (humoral immunity). And some vaccines bring about immunity by encouraging the body to produce certain blood cells which are programmed to kill viruses and bacteria (cellular immunity). There are also vaccines that trigger the body to use both types of immunity.

What should I know about the HAV vaccine ?

There are two Hepatitis A vaccines currently available in the United States:

One is called Havrix, and you may click this link for detailed information
http://us.gsk.com/products/assets/us_havrix.pdf

The other is called VAQTA, and you may click this link for detailed information
http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/v/vaqa/vaqa_pi.pdf.

Each was introduced into the United States in 1995, and each works by triggering your body to make HAV antibodies. The HAV vaccine series requires two shots, one given whenever you decide to get it, and a second shot between 6 and 12 months later.



Only people 1 year of age or over can safely get the vaccine.

It is *very important* that you complete the two-shot series in order to help your body make as many HAV antibodies as possible. The vaccine is very effective. Some studies show that after completing the two-shot series, 99% of people develop immunity to HAV and the vaccine can keep you immune from HAV for up to 20 years. There is a blood test which can tell you if you are already immune from HAV in case you don't have your complete medical history. However, getting the vaccine series—even if you had HAV infection in the past—will not hurt you in any way.



Please note that if you have ever had the hepatitis A infection before, *you do not need the vaccine series* because you are already immune for life. And though the HAV vaccine is very safe, the vaccinations must still be given by a nurse or a doctor.

What should I know about the HBV vaccine?

There are two Hepatitis B vaccines currently available in the United States:

One is called Recombivax HB, and you may click this link for detailed information
http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/r/recombivax_hb/recombivax_pi.pdf

The other is called Energix-B, and you may click on this link for detailed information
http://us.gsk.com/products/assets/us_engerixb.pdf

The original HBV vaccine was introduced into the United States in 1982, but was pulled off the market in 1992 because of unfounded fears that this vaccine could start an HBV infection instead of preventing it. The two HBV vaccines available today (above) are called recombinant DNA vaccines, and work by triggering your body to make HBV antibodies which will attack the hepatitis B virus if it infects your body.

The HBV vaccine series requires three shots. One is given whenever you decide to get it; the second is given at least one month later; and the third is given five months later. There is a blood test which can tell you if you are already immune from HBV in case you don't have your complete medical history. However, getting the vaccine series—even if you had HBV infection in the past—will not hurt you in any way.



Newborns, infants, the young and the elderly can all safely get the vaccine.

It is *very important* that you complete the three-shot series in order to help your body make as many HBV antibodies as possible. The vaccine is very effective. Studies show that after completing the three-shot series, 95% of people develop immunity to HBV and the vaccine can keep you immune from HAV for up to 20 years.



Please note that if you have ever had the hepatitis B infection before, *you do not need the vaccine series* because you are already immune for life. And though the HBV vaccine is very safe, the vaccinations must still be given by a nurse or a doctor.

What should I know about the combination HAV/HBV vaccine?

There is one combination Hepatitis A and B vaccination available in the United States at present:

It is called **Twinrix**, and you may use this link for detailed information

www.gskvaccines.com/vaccines/pages/vaccines_summary.jsp?product=TWINRIX

Twinrix is the world's only combination hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine, combining the antigenic components contained in Havrix® (Hepatitis A Vaccine, Inactivated) and Engerix-B® [Hepatitis B Vaccine (Recombinant)]. Twinrix is immunogenic against both hepatitis A virus (HAV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV), and provides comparable immunity to the monovalent vaccines when administered in a standard 3-dose schedule. Twinrix is indicated for active immunization of persons 18 years of age and older; it should be administered by intramuscular injection. Primary immunization for adults consists of three doses, given on a 0-, 1- and 6-month schedule. Seroconversion for antibodies against HAV was elicited in 99.9% of vaccinees, and protective antibodies against HBV were detected in 98.5%, one month after completion of the 3-dose schedule.